

# **ANNE MURPHY Misconstrues, Misrepresents Sikh Gurus' Mission, Revival Movement**

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*Consistent with the higher Sikh Studies supercilious academia and Sikh, pseudo-Sikh and non-Sikh literati clique's trend, Anne Murphy, Assistant Professor and Chair of Punjabi Language, Literature and Sikh Studies at UBC University of British Columbia, Canada constructs her 'THE MATERIALITY OF THE PAST History and Representation in Sikh Tradition', thesis on Apocrypha, Mythology, Heresy, Hearsay Fiction, and Folklore.*

*To support propositions, allusions and inferences, Anne Murphy interjects references from the highly controversial unauthentic sources, hence advertently and inadvertently, promotes burlesque apocrypha, stokes its authorship's perennial controversy; and abets heresy and occult traditions; worship of tombs. In the outlandish recondite jargon, she alludes that Sikh temples are pilgrimage sites, and equates Sikh relics to 'Holy Grail and Khilat' and insinuates that the Sikh Gurus' epistles, and gifts of weapons, objects, robes and Scarves of honour were intended to constitute Sikh community and foster temporal authority; and posits that the post-Guru period Sikh families and leadership not only followed suit, but mobilised such relics, history and historical sites (Sikh temples) to reformulate Sikh community, forge territoriality, statist authority and sovereignty.*

*That, Anne Murphy subscribes to the school of motley coterie of Sikh, non-Sikh and pseudo-Sikh supercilious academia and literati, is evident from the postulates and inferences from their Sikh Studies dissertations and acknowledgement of the support and help they rendered to her during the course of her higher studies at various locales. My critiques of Sikh Studies dissertations of some of the coterie's members, Hew McLeod, Gurinder Singh Mann, Harjot Oberoi, Pashaura Singh, Louis Fenech, Doris Jakobsh, who feature prominently in Anne Murphy's thesis are published in my book, 'Target Sikhism'.*

*Also, Anne Murphy's cynical representation of the late nineteen and early twentieth century Singh Sabha reformers and stalwart Sikhs' heroic struggle and sacrifices to free Sikh temples from corrupt, imperious Mahants' chokehold; and purge Sikhism of cultism, occultism, paganism, in her rhetorical thesis, (henceforth Murphy's thesis) reveals her comradery with the academia and literati clique and conformity to its literary genre, detracting Sikhism. Relevant snippets from Murphy's thesis are critiqued. Excerpts from Anne Murphy's thesis are scribed verbatim. My text is italicised.*

## **Heresy, Heterodoxy**

*'...Sikh steel armour plate ....is said to have featured a verse of the Tenth Guru called "Akal Ustat.... ....its similarity to a set of plates in the collection of royal family of Patiala state....which have been gifted to the family by the Guru himself..." suggests that the Guru commissioned more than one set.' Murphy's thesis, Introduction, P 3,*

“Akal` Ustat” is found at the opening of the Dasam Granth, a text attributed to the Tenth Guru.’ Ibid, footnote

‘The gifts of the Guru are, for instance,.....displayed in the small village of Phaphare Bhai Ki....Here these objects—weapons and clothing belonging to Tenth Guru, such as *Katar* or dagger....and pair of shoes—attest to the long relationship of the ...family of village patriarch Bhai Bhilo, and his descents with the Gurus. The Bhaies of Bagrian also hold objects that attest to the relationship of their family with the Gurus; they too are descended from the patriarch Rup Chand...The sixth Guru presented a ladle and other gifts to the family in conjunction with a mandate to provide *langar*...The Bhaies then came to act as primary religious authorities for princely state of eastern Punjab, who were seen to derive their right to rule from the Guru.’ Ibid, p. 11

‘Objects and sites constitute this past in the present to take part in a broader historical imaginary (*adjective used as noun dozen times in thesis*), through which the Sikh community is produced through its living relationship.’ Ibid, p. 13

*As per Sikhism’s cardinal doctrine mundane objects; animate or inanimate are mortal, ephemeral and worthless, (see G.G. S. hymn ‘koord raja...’ p. 468 and couplet jo upjeo...’ p. 1429). Anne Murphy’s approbatory depiction of Sikh heretics’ heterodoxy i.e. collection, reverence, worship and display of relics; weapons, artifacts as status symbols in her thesis evidences her ignorance of Sikh canons.*

‘As Gurinder Singh Mann has noted, the idea of the Guru as pilgrimage center developed into “the belief that the Guru ‘sanctifies’ the spot where he sits and Sikhs should aspire ‘to rub their forehead with its dust.’” Ibid, p. 31

*Contrary to Murphy’s inference and Mann’s misinterpretation of verse, ‘(jithé jáé Bahé méré sat-Guru...G. G. S. p. 450)’; verily connotes ‘where the true-Guru sojourns the place is hallowed with his sage Word..), “It (Sikhism) prohibits...pilgrimages...” M. A. Macauliffe (1837-1913), ‘The Sikh Religion’, Vol. 1, Preface, p. xxiii*

‘The Guru is said to have blessed the mirror--(given to Guru Gobind Singh by the community in Delhi)--, saying that anyone who comes with love... and sits looking into it for three days, reciting Ardas and eating chickpeas (*chole de dāne*), will be cured of facial paralysis...’Ibid, p. 35

‘According to the account given by the staff at Bhattha Sahib laborers were working with hot fire in a kiln (*bhattha*) that belonged to Nihang Khan, an Afghan, when the Guru (Gobind Singh) arrived there with his followers. The Guru asked for place to rest, and the workers mockingly told him to rest in the fire. The fire turned cold with the touch of Guru’s horse, preserving the signs of the horse’s hooves in three separate locations in the hardened clay that now stands at center of the gurdwara.’

‘Juun Singh...had a dream to come to this place...He abandoned his house and built a small hut...He started ...digging...the *bhattha* came out of the ground...the site had power, and all wishes requested at the site were fulfilled. Murphy’s thesis, pp. 39-40

*Anne Murphy’s narratives approbating heterodoxy of heretic Sikhs is exactly what Max Arthur Macauliffe describes as burlesque, beguiling accounts,*

“On perusing (*reading*) the current lives and accounts of the Gurus I found them over-laden with puerile (*absurd*), heterodox or repulsive details...this work is intended to be an exact presentation of teachings of the Sikh Gurus.... as contained in their sacred books, and is by no means (*to*) put forth a portrayal of the debased superstitions and heterodox social customs of Sikhs who have been led astray by external influence.” **M. A. Macauliffe**, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. 1, pp. xvi-xvii

### **Absurd Translation**

‘Guru Gobind Singh, it must be recalled, also wrote in Persian—his famous appeal for justice to the Mughal emperor, the *Zafar Nama*...’Murphy’s Thesis, p. 73

*The Persian words Zafar, or Jafar means victory; and Nama means composition, letter. Guru Gobind Singh’s masterpiece poetic Persian composition ‘Jafar-Nama’ articulates sanctimony, duplicity and bigotry of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb and his Mughal and Hindu forces’ alliance commanders’ treachery: and ultimate moral victory of the Guru and Khalsa.*

### **Sikh Gurus’ Mission Misconstrued**

“Whoever’s mother or father dies: They should not shave their heads.

Gobind is our mother and father....” Murphy’s Thesis, p. 89

‘Here, the radical nature of Guru Gobind Singh’s teachings is expounded fully: the Guru is identified as mother and father... (*Jiwan*) Deol relates this injunction to a larger phenomenon, namely the creation of what he calls a metanarrative derived from Dasam Granth in which the aspirations of the Khalsa community to define itself as distinct and sovereign placed within a framework based on Puranic myth, defining *dharam* in a mode that is simultaneously religious and political.’ Ibid

‘According to this “grand narrative” at the center of Khalsa self-construction lie worship of weapons and the perception of partaking in Guru’s mission to establish dharma, a mission that is itself embedded in a wider cosmological cycle of battles against evil that extends back to mythical times.’ Ibid

*Sikh Studies dubious scholarship of both, Anne Murphy and Jiwan Deol is evident from misinterpretation of Sri Gur Sobha, chapter 5, verse 22 in which Gobind connotes God, not Guru Gobind Singh; and reference to dubious phenomenon, derived from equally dubious source, ‘dasam granth’,*

‘Just as the power of the king was articulated alongside other forms of power through the gifts, religious and nonreligious modes of engagements were intermingled in such practices...’ Ibid, pp 50

‘In the Sikh context, such gifts by the Gurus reflect both politics in relation to state formation and politics of community building...’Ibid, pp 50-1

‘This was common way for the Gurus to maintain and strengthen ties among their followers, to establish and demonstrate authority...’ ibid, p. 51

*The Sikh Gurus’ mission, to build a self-esteemed, pluralistic, egalitarian and pious community without political opportunism, is enshrined in Sikh scriptures.*

(God) 'I don't desire kingship...G. G. S'. P. 538

(God if you) grant kingship, what is glory; or make (me) to beg; what is lost? Ibid, P. 525

*Even, a quatrain in obscure author's composition Bachiter Natak mythology, (astutely or asininely ascribed to Guru Gobind Singh), alludes to Guru's mission, (God said) 'I bless and send you my son to preach religion...'* Ch. 6, verse 30

"...Guru had to build a nation of self-respecting men, devoted to God and to their leader, filled with a sense of equality and brotherhood for all, ready to die, nay eager to die, as martyrs for their faith when opportunity allowed, and yet prepared to fight the tyrant with his own weapons in defence of the weak and to protect the righteous" **Duncan**

**Greenlees**, *The Gospel of Guru Granth Sahib*, p. xxiii-xxiv

### **Cynical Polemics**

'A number of twentieth century versions of the *rehit* exist, drawing upon and developing further existing early forms. These represent the effort to...bring them into line with the evolving orthodoxy associated with the Singh Sabha, the reform movement that defined the contours of modern Sikhism....Murphy's Thesis, p. 57

'Competing ideologies arose... as explored at length by Harjot Oberoi, in what he identifies as a conflict between a Tat Khalsa and a "Sanatan Sikh" perspective on Sikh tradition. The latter, he argues, was open to an "enchanted universe" in which multiplicity and hybridity were norm; the former was invested in articulating a bounded definition of being a Sikh that denied commonality, in particular, with Hinduism. Thus, he argues that an "older" paradigm of Sikh faith was displaced by highly uniform Sikh identity to one we know today as modern Sikhism.' Ibid, pp. 128-9

'The... Akali Movement was radicalizing, threatening the disloyalty of the central pieces of the British military puzzle: Punjabi...Sikhs...The other, larger movement that coincided with Gurdwara Movement which pledged to fight British colonial regime through...non-violence. Ruchi Ram Sahni...described the gurdwara movement as "the best and most inspiring instance of Mahatma Gandhi's teachings of non-violence in thought, word and deed...' Ibid, p. 199

'Fundamentally, the (*Gurdwara Reform*) movement was about who had the right to control gurdwaras and the lands associated with them...At first, conflict was between, in Fox's words, "different sorts of Sikhs", as the Singh (*Sabha*) reformers as they sought to wrest control of the gurdwaras from *Mahants* and *Sarbrahs*...' Ibid, p. 203

'The rhetoric of the (*Reform*) movement centrally addressed the question of who was...a Sikh, all with reference to the **specter of the past** as source of tradition.' Ibid

'As this organization (*SGPC*) attempted to position itself as the only legitimate authority over gurdwaras---groups organized across Punjab to orchestrate the **forcible takeover of such shrines**. Ibid, p. 209

'...."gurdwara guides", began to appear in print in the end of nineteenth century... and wide array of pamphlets, in general became available.' Ibid, p. 241

'(N. G) Barrier (*Christian crusader in literary garb*) notes that at this time tracts were generally of two types: appeals (*Benti*) or polemical...' Footnote, Ibid

*Anne Murphy and her ilk's polemics, cynical inferences, allusions and comments in passages scribed above reflect their cynical mind set.*

*Records and excerpts from Murphy's thesis and Sikh Studies scholars' objective perspectives and commentaries scribed below relate the deviant Mahants' control of Gurdwaras, Hinduism's predatory and Christian missionaries' proselytizing agendas that prodded the Singh Sabha, Akali reformers' heroic struggle and sacrifices.*

'They [the Sikhs] allege that their *gurdwaras* and shrines are in deplorable condition. They contend that the *Mahants* and *Pujaris* in charge of most of their *gurdwaras* and shrines are men of bad character, men who misappropriate the funds of these institutions, men who instead of being saintly and thus likely to exert salutary influence on the shrines, are evil minded; vicious, and in fact so low and depraved as to contaminate the simple faithful worshipers of these shrines.'" Ruchi Ram Sahni, Punjab Legislative Council Debate 1921 Murphy's Thesis, p. 215

"The Sikhs are practically Hindus. When defending the rights of Sahajdhari Sikhs, therefore, Hindus believe that this is our affair as well, embodying as we do the Hindu sects and the various sects that are classed as Sikhs." Rai Bahadur Lala Hari Chand, Punjab Legislative Council Debate 1921, Ibid, p. 211

'...a group of *Mahants* from Hardwar argued that "the term Sikh is too vague and liable to misinterpretation. Sikh at present connotes Hindus who are followers of Guru Nanak forming a vast majority as well as who call themselves Tatkhalsa and non-Hindus.'" Ibid, p. 217

"In 1834, the American Ludhiana Mission began its work in Punjab. It...published New Testament in Punjabi It met with little success until 1873 when four Sikh students of Amritsar Mission School declared their intention to be baptised. Such conversions as had occurred previously had been among low caste, mostly illiterate Sikhs." **W. Owen Cole**, Sikhism, p. 148

"No sooner had the Sikhs (*Singh Sabha*) begun to counter the Christian threat than another Hindu challenge developed. In 1877, the Arya Samaj, a Hindu reform movement, became active in Punjab." Ibid

"Arya missionaries...threaten the very existence of Sikh religion, until the Singh Sabha movement struck back through its educational programmes." Ibid, p 149

"It (Hinduism) is like a boa constrictor of the Indian forests. When...enemy appears to worry it, it winds round its opponent, crushes it in its folds, and finally causes it to disappear in its capacious interior. In this way...Hinduism disposed of Buddhism...absorbed religion of Scythian invaders...converted uneducated Islam in India into paganism; ...Hinduism has embraced Sikhism in its folds...And Brahmans... have partially succeeded in persuading the Sikhs to restore to their niches the images of Devi...saints and gods of ancient faith." **M. A. Macauliffe**, 'The Sikh Religion', p. lvii